

## PINE FLATWOODS

A 1 mile loop (1.6 km). Allow 30-40 minutes. The trail follows established fire break roads. The pine flatwoods ecosystem is dominated by fire tolerant plants such as slash pine, several species of scrub oaks, saw palmetto gall berry and wire grass. This plant community provides important habitat to many species of reptiles, amphibians, large and small mammals, hawks, owls, wood peckers, and song-birds. Look for birds in all layers of the pine forest: the canopy, sub-canopy, and scrub. Old tall pine trees are the preferred nest trees for bald eagles. Over a dozen eagle nests occur on the Refuge. When the habitat becomes slightly higher and drier, scrub oaks become the dominant plant. Scrub jays utilize this habitat. Look for them in open "scrubby" locations. In spring and fall, enjoy the rich palette of colors provided by wildflowers. During the fall, winter, and spring look for migratory songbirds, raptors, and nesting bald eagles. Scrub jays are common all year.

### DIRECTIONS FROM VISITORS CENTER

Turn right out of the entrance road to the Visitors Center. Go to the traffic light and turn left onto SR3. Pine Flatwoods is 10.5 miles from the traffic light.



## MAPS

Maps are pictured on interpretive signs at each trailhead.

## WHAT TO BRING

Plenty of drinking water, a hat, sunscreen. Use mosquito and tick repellent year round. Mosquitoes can be heavy during the wet season from May through September.

## PARKING

There is plenty of parking at all trailheads.

## HANDICAP ACCESS

There is no handicap access on any trail except the Boardwalk at the Visitors Center.

## HIKING AREAS OTHER THAN TRAILS

Areas other than trails may be hiked unless posted with a sign stating "Area Closed". Dike roads between impoundments vary in length and can provide interesting hikes.

## BICYCLES

Bicycles are prohibited on all Refuge trails. Bicycles are permitted on roadways. SR 406 is closed to bicycle use during the hours of 6:00 – 8:00 am and 3:00 – 5:00 pm.

## SAFETY

All trails are essentially flat with little elevation gain. Shoes should be sturdy and have closed toes. Watch for roots and rocks. Boardwalks may be slippery when wet. Thunderstorms are common in summer. If weather threatens return to your vehicle as soon as possible. Poison ivy is common along many trails. Although uncommon there are several venomous snakes in the Refuge. Spider webs should be avoided. Do not feed or approach wildlife.

## Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

Phone: 321/861-0667



**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
**Merritt Island**  
National Wildlife Refuge  
Titusville, Florida

# Hiking Trails



## BOARDWALK

A ¼ mile loop (.4 km). Allow 15 minutes. The Boardwalk offers great views of two freshwater ponds, a native butterfly garden, hammock, a wetland prairie and associated wildlife. It is posted with twelve interpretive signs. There are three benches along the Boardwalk.

Be sure to pick up the detailed guide to the Boardwalk from the Visitor Center desk.

### DIRECTIONS FROM VISITORS CENTER

The Boardwalk is directly behind the Visitors Center and open during Visitor Center hours. Wheelchair access is available through the Visitors Center.

## OAK AND PALM HAMMOCK

Dominant trees are live oak, cabbage palm, laurel oak, pignut hickory, red maple, and American elm. Tropical species such as Simpson stopper, wild coffee, and wild orange are common in the scrub layer. Air plants and orchids are in the canopy. Hardwood hammocks provide important wildlife habitat for a wide variety of songbirds, hawks, woodpeckers, owls, wrens, and mammals. Hammocks commonly occur in zones between the uplands and wetlands and are naturally protected from fire by their position on the landscape.

### OAK HAMMOCK

A 3/4 mile loop (1.2 km). Allow 20-30 minutes. The trail is a figure 8 that winds through seasonally flooded forests. Be sure to take both loops. It is posted with interpretive signs that explain the ecology of the hammock community. There are three benches along the trail.

### PALM HAMMOCK

A 2 mile loop (3.2 km). Allow 40-50 minutes. The trail makes a loop through the palm hammock and returns on the same path. Hiking conditions can be muddy after rain.

#### DIRECTIONS FROM VISITORS CENTER

*Turn right out of the entrance road to the Visitors Center. The Hammock Trails are 1.2 miles on the left. Both trails cross a railroad track which can be a challenge for individuals with disabilities.*



## CRUICKSHANK AND WILD BIRD

### WILD BIRD

A 1/2 mile (0.8 km) round trip that follows a gravel lined dike road. Allow 30 minutes. The trail offers views of two distinctly different wildlife habitats each of which has a viewing blind. The water level of the habitat to the right rises and falls with tides of the Indian River Lagoon. Exposed mudflats and tidal wetlands attract a variety of shorebirds. Mixed species such as avocet, ruddy turnstone, willet, semipalmated plover and stilts are often seen feeding together. Water levels of the habitat on the left are controlled to a depth of 12-18 inches. Watch for waterfowl, raptors, and wading birds such as egrets, herons, and spoonbills.

### ALLAN D. CRUICKSHANK MEMORIAL

A 5 mile (8.1 km) loop that follows a mosquito control dike. Allow 2-4 hours. The east loop forms a ring around Black Point Marsh and is an excellent place to observe marsh and wading birds. During fall and winter the marsh is allowed to fill with water to provide feeding areas for overwintering migratory birds. Water levels of the marsh are allowed to fluctuate with tides of the Indian River Lagoon during the remainder of the year. Generally the best birding is October through April along Black Point Marsh where three habitats converge: salt marsh, marsh stream, and interior impoundment. There are 3 weather shelters along the trail.

#### DIRECTIONS FROM VISITORS CENTER

*Turn left out of the entrance road to the Visitors Center. Turn right at the first intersection onto SR 406 and follow the signs to Blackpoint Wildlife Drive (BPWD). Enter BPWD. The Wild Bird trailhead is at stop 4. Park on the right past the entrance to the trail. The Cruickshank trailhead is at stop 9.*

### SCRUB RIDGE

A 1 mile loop (1.6 km). Allow 30-40 minutes. The trail offers a leisurely stroll through some of the most unique habitat in Florida. The loop starts on a solid sandy limestone trail that runs through scrub and



returns back over a grass covered road that runs between a freshwater impoundment and scrub habitat. Scrub is a distinctive plant community found in scattered locations throughout Florida. The Merritt Island scrub community provides a home for more endangered and threatened wildlife than any other Florida habitat. Signs of wildlife may not be visible at first glance. Look closely and you will probably see tracks of endangered gopher tortoises, white tailed deer, spotted skunks, bobcats and feral hogs. Watch for the endangered and harmless indigo snake. You may also see the tracks of sand lizards, scrub jays, or the Florida mouse all of which live exclusively in scrub habitat. Listen and look for a rich variety of birds. One of the most common is the Eastern towhee whose call sounds like "drink your tea." Look for red-bellied and pileated woodpeckers and northern flickers near the pines. During spring and fall migration numerous songbirds can be seen flitting through the pines. Look carefully for a very important resident, the endangered Florida scrub jay. This colorful blue-gray resident lives in family groups of 2-5 members establishing territories of 10-50 acres. Watch for sentries posted on guard duty and listen for their warning call as you approach. Scrub jays and other endangered species can only survive if the unique scrub habitats are protected and properly managed.

#### DIRECTIONS FROM VISITORS CENTER

*Turn right out of the entrance road to the Visitors Center. Go to the traffic light and turn left onto SR3. Scrub Ridge Trail is 3.8 miles on the right. Follow the dirt road 0.4 miles to the trailhead.*